

Custer in Texas

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patched together a series of tales from his notes, adding whatever transitional sentences were deemed necessary. Also, and this is a more basic and significant problem, many of the stories are frosted with conversations between the actors, including detailed reports of their emotions. Such superfluous icing on the cake often leaves the reader not knowing where the historical reality concludes and the author's imagination commences.

In the final analysis, *Jews on the Frontier* presents a compassionate look at a fascinating group of people whose story deserves to be told. It is enjoyable to read, and will probably be found useful by those with an interest in Jewish studies. But the book is also little more than a collection of entertaining anecdotes, and this does not necessarily make for good history. It does not tell us as much as we would like to know about the "underlying causes." And Sharfman's embellishments leave us with confusion as well as insight about the true nature of the Jewish experience on the American frontier.

—Jerold A. Rosen
Los Angeles, California

Custer in Texas, by John M. Carroll. New York: Sol Lewis/Liveright, 1975. pp. xx, 288. Illustrations, appendixes, bibliography, index. \$15.00.

Hell hath no fury like an historian scooped. While researching the Samuel Kirkwood papers in Des Moines, I discovered numerous letters protesting the treatment of the First Iowa Cavalry at the hands of the commanding officer of the U.S. Cavalry in Texas in 1865-66, one George Armstrong Custer. Further digging revealed innumerable memorials to Iowa officials—including Adjutant General Baker, Governor Stone, and the legislature, itself—petitioning for redress for the "cruel and barbarous" manner in which the "despot" Custer treated the proud Iowa volunteers. Then I belatedly discovered John M. Carroll's *Custer in Texas*. The story had already been told. Or had it?

The story, itself, is a simple one. In the summer of 1865 the First Iowa Cavalry and several other state cavalry regiments were assigned to Alexandria, Louisiana, Department of the Gulf, under the direct command of Major-General Custer. With him they marched to Hempstead, Texas, and then to Austin, where they were finally mustered out in February 1866. During that period they complained continually about marching conditions, the lack of adequate food and medical supplies, and the ruthless manner in which their commanding general administered discipline. Although much of this was no more than the usual soldier complaints against army life, accentuated by the understandable desire to return home, there was a particular focus to the unrest. Special Order No. 2, issued by General Custer in Alexandria, demanded summary punishment by the lash and/or head shaving, *without access to trial by court martial*, of anyone caught (accused) of foraging

without an order. To western troops, who considered all Southerners traitors, war or no war, the order was ridiculous, more so when their own commissary failed to provide adequate rations. The exclusion of court martial and use of the lash were questionable, at best, under military law. So, the soldiers and officers in the Second Cavalry Division did what they had done throughout the war whenever they had perceived their welfare threatened. They wrote home. The Iowa House of Representatives petitioned their Congressmen and Senators to remove Custer from active duty, and soldiers and civilians pleaded with Kirkwood, if he could not remove the flaxen-haired villain, to at least prevent his promotion to the regular army.

But, that is not quite the story that Carroll tells. First, *Custer in Texas* is not a narrative. Instead, it is a series of edited documents, portions of which are grouped together in nine chronological chapters. The major sources include Libby Custer's *Tenting on the Plains*, Charles Lothrop's *History of the First Iowa Cavalry*, histories of the Seventh Indiana and Second Wisconsin Calvaries, memoirs and reminiscences, and official orders and communications. There is little to hold the separate narratives and documents together, and it is often impossible to tell whether you are reading a documentary source or the author's editorial comments.

Secondly, the book lacks the rigors of intellectual balance. "I am pro-Custer," the author proclaims (p. xi). According to Carroll, the boy general took "tough but necessary" disciplinary measures required to fulfill his orders to help pacify Texas. His only mistake was that he "did not take into account the 'new civilization' which had given rise to powerful 'back home' political voices" and "which allowed a lessening of discipline within military ranks (p. xii)." Regimental surgeon and historian Lothrop and regimental commander Lt. Col. McQueen "managed to reduce a really honest and serious situation, which was already complicated enough, to the level of petty and personal arguments (p. xv)." In short, Carroll argues that Custer needed to take harsh disciplinary actions, and opposition to those measures was petty and short-sighted.

Aside from the organizational problem of requiring the reader to examine the documents with the same thoroughness and detail of the author, *Custer in Texas* suffers seriously from the author's defensive posture. His documents do not include regimental or company order and letter books, which could have shed considerable light on the everyday operations of the cavalry units under Custer's command. He attempted no search for the original petitions and memorials to state officials. The tradition of volunteer regiments seeking the protection of their state officials—honored from the beginning of the war—is not considered. Most importantly, the actual legality of lashing (flogging had been banned by military order in 1862) and the suspension of court martial are not even questioned. Pettiness and jealousy not to the contrary, Special Order No. 2 must weigh heavy as evidence.

John M. Carroll has done justice to neither Custer nor his troops. The situation should be examined from a much broader perspective than the attack

or defense of one of the most controversial figures in American history. The Texas experience of the Wisconsin, Indiana, and Iowa cavalry regiments is an extremely visible and well-documented example of the intermediary relationship of the states between their locally raised volunteers and the federal governmental authority under which they supposedly served. For these reasons, far from precluding further study of the subject, John Carroll's *Custer in Texas* almost demands it.

—David Crosson, Director
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Protestantism in an Age of Science: The Baconian Ideal and American Religious Thought, by Theodore Dwight Bozeman. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1977. pp. xv, 243. \$14.95.

In recent years historians of religion and other scholars have explored many hitherto neglected relationships between Christianity and various fields of secular thought in the United States. Aspects of the Enlightenment, for example, have been treated in such works as Alfred Aldridge's study of Benjamin Franklin's religious beliefs and Paul Boller's investigation of George Washington and Deism. More recently, Henry May's important volume, *The Enlightenment in America*, has shed light on many ties between religious and philosophical thought in the eighteenth century. Furthermore, the ongoing confrontation of natural science with religion sparked in part by the reception of Charles Darwin's theories in North America in the 1860's and 1870's has produced a flurry of studies going back at least as far as those by Andrew White at the turn of the century. Now Theodore Dwight Bozeman has begun to fill one large gap in this historiography by considering the attempts of certain antebellum American churchmen to appropriate scientific method and apply it to theology.

Bozeman challenges the assertion of Sidney Mead, his predecessor in American religious history at the University of Iowa, that "the bulk of American Protestantism turned against the ethos of the Enlightenment and thereafter found itself indifferent to, or in active opposition to, the general spiritual and intellectual currents of modern Western civilization." He begins by analyzing the central place of the inductive scientific method advocated by the English philosopher Francis Bacon in the Scottish realism associated with Thomas Reid and Dugald Stewart. Bozeman argues convincingly that Baconian empiricism, having replaced Aristotelian deduction as the prevailing form of scientific inquiry in Britain, was conveyed to America late in the eighteenth century by such men as President John Witherspoon of Princeton. In the New World it found an enthusiastic reception, especially among Presbyterian theologians eager to keep abreast with, rather than shun, contemporary intellectual currents. These Calvinist churchmen sought to demonstrate empirically the essential harmony of Christianity and natural science.

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